

REMARKS

Claims 1-21 are pending in the above-referenced patent application and have been rejected by the Examiner. The rejections are traversed as set forth below.

Claims 19-20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as allegedly being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,606,744 to Mikurak (hereinafter "Mikurak").

Based on the Examiner's comments, Applicant assumes the rejection of claims 19-20 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) was intended to be directed to claims 19 and 21 instead of claims 19-20 and responds accordingly.

Claims 1, 5-9, 15-17 and 20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,799,157 to Escallon (hereinafter "Escallon") in view of Mikurak.

Claims 2-4, 10-11 and 18 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Escallon in view of Mikurak and Official Notice.

Claim 12 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Escallon in view of Mikurak, U.S. Patent No. 5,897,622 to Blinn et al. (hereinafter "Blinn") and Official Notice.

Claims 13 and 14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Escallon in view of Mikurak and Blinn.

In response to the above-identified rejections of claims 1-21, Applicant submits the attached Rule 1.131 Declaration of Kenneth A. Fischburg to swear behind and remove the Mikurak reference from consideration as prior art to the present application. Thus, the Mikurak reference is not an appropriate prior art reference to the present application, and the above-identified rejections, each of which are based in part on the Mikurak reference, should be withdrawn and claims 1-21 passed to issue.

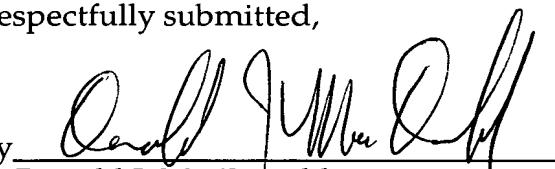
CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that pending claims 1-21 are in condition for allowance and action to that effect is earnestly solicited.

Pursuant to 37 CFR § 1.136, Applicant hereby requests a two-month extension of time to respond to the Office Action mailed October 17, 2003. A check in the amount of \$210 for the extension fee is enclosed herewith to extend the allowable period of time to file a response through March 17, 2004. No additional fees are believed to be due in connection with the present Response. However, if any deficiencies exist, please charge them to Deposit Account No. 13-0235.

Respectfully submitted,

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